MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. RESETTLEMENT AND NESTING OF STREAK-THROATED SWALLOW *HIRUNDO FLUVICOLA* BLYTH, 1855

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Streak-throated Swallow *Hirundo fluvicola* is a member of Family Hirundinidae, and resident to India. A highly gregarious bird it usually nests in close proximity of water with other swallows (Ali and Ripley 2001). Except its distribution (Grimmett *et al.* 1999; Ali and Ripley 2001), no information is available from literature about its ecological and ethological aspects.

A colony of Streak-throated Swallow at the Government College Malpura, Tonk (Rajasthan), was destroyed by the College Estate Wing while renovating the college building on October 15, 2010. The birds did not abandon the destructed nest site, instead after four days they started rebuilding the nests at the same site. The nests were built on the underside of the roof of the building 9 m from the ground. The colony was rebuilt in four months (Eds: photographic evidence provided); for this the birds collected mud from the waterline of a pond, about 400 m south-east. Blobs of mud were deposited on the building wall to make the first layer of the nest. The birds took about 15 to 20 days to deposit a single layer of mud, slowly constructing spacious chambers in each nest. After completing the nest, a tunnel of mud was added to the side of each nest. A total of 259 nests were counted in the colony. Ten incomplete nests in the colony were encroached by *Passer domesticus*.

Destruction of one row of nests could not keep the birds away from the nesting site. Instead, they made two rows of nests at the same site. The estate wing of the College cleans the walls every year, and the birds return every year to colonize the same site.

Nest building material of birds has been studied by many like Dewar (1909), Ali (1931), Mathew (1972), Davis (1973), Clark and Mason (1985), Fauth *et al.* (1991), Sharma (1991), and Brouwer and Komdeur (2004). Resettlement of Streak-throated Swallow at the same site might be influenced by proximity of agriculture lands and waterbodies. Selection of nest site is an important task in colonial breeding (Frederick and Collopy 1989). Birds usually prefer their nesting sites within the foraging site so as to reduce the number of trips to the nest. Closer feeding sites also help in increased vigilance of the nest and minimise chances of predation of eggs and nestlings (Ishtiaq *et al.* 2004). Korol and Hutto (1984) also showed the significance of different habitat around nesting sites of the birds. Phenomenon of resettlement has also been observed in weaver birds (Alexandar and Pushparaj 2010). Further study is required on the social organization and ethological aspects of this species, which will help to determine its management.

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2. NILGIRI PIPIT *ANTHUS NILGHIRIENSIS* FEEDING IN FLOWING WATER

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Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nilghiriensis* is endemic to grasslands in the Western Ghats mountain range in south-western India (Alström and Mild 2003).

All members of the Motacillidae family feed largely on small invertebrates. The wide, but long, and pointed bill of the pipits is perfectly adapted for picking prey from soft sand, among rocks and pebbles, and in short vegetation. A huge array of invertebrates is eaten by pipits. Insects predominate its diet, but a wide variety of other arthropods ranging from spiders, and other arachnids, to myriapods, worms, small terrestrial, freshwater or marine molluscs, and crustaceans are also consumed. Seeds and other vegetable material are eaten by many species of pipits (Simms 1992), but they form a small part of the diet. For many motacillids, there is still rather little information available on the diet other than the fact that small insects and other invertebrates are eaten (Tyler 2004).

Pipits and wagtails are chiefly insect-eaters, flies especially adult Diptera are preferred. Beetles, grasshoppers and other ground-living insects, may also appear in pipit diets.

While watching birds near Rajmalai shola, Eravikulam National Park, Kerala, on June 01, 2010, I noticed a Nilgiri Pipit feeding in a shallow flow of water over a sprawling granite rock. The clear water trickling down from the shola was barely 1-3 cm deep except for some scattered puddles. The bird was actively catching insects from the surface of the water. At times I observed it catching insects from deep puddles by immersing its whole head into water. I observed the pipit's activity from 09:30 to 10:15 hrs without a break. A large number of the catch was mostly picked from the surface of the water. Obviously, it was capitalizing on abundant supply of prey in the flowing water.

While most wagtails, and those pipits with long claws that favour wetland habitats, are known to wade in shallow water to pick aquatic invertebrates, the Nilgiri Pipit "forages on ground, in short grass" (Tyler 2004).

Regarding its food and feeding habits, Ali and Ripley (1998) mention "insects and small seeds" as its food but do not describe foraging habits. Nevertheless, like most motacillids it appears to be catholic in its choice of insects and also opportunistic.

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3. DISCOVERY OF A LARGE HERONRY AT CHHATA, NEAR MATHURA, IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

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The Delhi region has several heronries (Urfi 1993) of which the most well-known are the ones located inside the premises of the Delhi Zoo (Urfi 1997) and Sultanpur National Park (Urfi *et al.* 2007). In antiquity, other heronries, now